

Five Percent

Why are you doing this, she asked
as she collapsed onto the bathroom floor.

Calmly I backed against the wall and slid down,
coming to a seat with my legs Indian-style.

I had never heard her wail like that before.

Zooming in on her filigree earrings I offered
the skimpiest resemblance of what passed for a reason
before she broke again
like so many champagne bottles against ships.

I told her we were gods on earth
and the eighty-five percent of the population who were lost
did not matter to me as much
as the ten percent who controlled them.

But why are you doing this, she asked again
unhappy with my spiritual asides
and looking for a more concrete explanation.

A woman named Michele with just one 'L'
lays with a friend she barely knows
after drinking gin out of a plastic cup
beside her apartment's egg-shaped swimming pool.
She says, I'm a respite from responsibility
and I don't believe in God, and then she
flashes a pair of green eyes that make me believe her.

I didn't tell her that part, though.

In this life, I said,
I am constantly searching for something realer than real
so I can sink into it
and lose myself
which is just another way of saying
I am incessantly looking for the easiest way
toward extinguishing myself.

She scrunched up her face.

Why are you doing this, she asked again
and the words that fell out of her mouth loitered in the air
before remaining unanswered by me, or anyone.